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ABSTRACT

This report presents a strong case for integrating academic advising into the residential setting. It is pointed out that a certain degree of friendliness and informality exists in these settings that encourages discussion and information exchange, and the professional staffs who work in residence halls are specifically trained to address students' developmental needs. Eight features of the setting are noted: (1) residence hall staff has continuous contact with students; (2) they know students individually; (3) they have good communications networks; (4) they can identify troubled students earlier than can other departments; (5) students know these staff members care; (6) students usually talk about psycho-social development in their first 2 years of college, rather than about intellectual development; (7) residence halls can provide an accessible and informal atmosphere; and (8) the student network will give very immediate feedback on all issues. The residentially-based academic advising programs at the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, and the University of Illinois are described in this report and information is included on programs, structure, staff, referral procedures, and libraries. (ABL)

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USING RESIDENCE HALLS in the ACADEMIC ADVISING PROCESS: THREE BIG-TEN MODELS

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

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A strong case can be made for integrating academic advising into the residential setting. A certain degree of personability and informality exists in these settings that encourages discussion and information exchange, and the professional staffs who work in residence halls are specifically trained to address students' developmental needs. The following eight features of this setting are noteworthy:

1 - The staff has continuous contact with students;

2 - they know their students, individually;

3 - they have good communications networks;

4 - they are able to idendify students who are in trouble much earlier than other campus units are able;

5 - students know that these staff members "care" to a greater degree than they know their academic advisors "care;"

6 - these settings can provide an accessible and informal atmosphere;

7 - the student network will give very immediate feedback on all issues;

8 - what students say they get out of college during their first two years of college is usually psycho-social, and that is well within the realm of student affairs' expertise. Students usually do not talk about intellectual development, although the academic sector must assume that students have a concern for such development when delivering academic services. Involving student affairs and academic affairs in advising processes addresses this incongruity.

The Universities of Iowa, Michigan and Illinois all employ residentially-based undergraduate advising programs. In this paper I intend to describe these programs along such criteria as effectiveness, appropriateness to the setting, and integration into the university's "regular" advising systems.

CASE 1 - THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The University of Iowa (29,712 students) is organized by colleges. With the exception of Engineering students, entering freshmen are all enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts: 35% declared majors; 26% open majors; 39% in pre-professional programs.

In the past, academic advising had been done by faculty members, with open majors randomly distributed among a group of General Advisors on the Liberal Arts faculty. Increased enrollments, inconsistency of advising, and a concern for the higher attrition rate of open majors led university officials to establish an advising center for a better advising system.

1. Structure

The Advising Center has one director, one assistant director, five full-time, three three-quarter time and nineteen half-time advisors who advise 6,581 Open Major & pre-Journalism students. The majority of advisees are freshmen and sophomores. Each half-time advisor has approximately 200 students and is able to see each student at least twice each semester. In addition, advisors see entering freshmen in small groups as school begins.

The main purpose of the Center is to help its students explore majors and clarify educational goals. Additionally, the Center assures open majors that there are persons on campus specifically concerned about their academic welfare. The Center pursues an "intrusive" advising philosophy, taking pains to track down students in academic trouble and offering extra planning to those who need it.

2. Location

For the convenience of students, the Advising Center has two locations, both in residence halls, on opposite sides of the campus. It was hoped that the residence hall location would help create a more informal atmosphere and would enable students to find someone to help them at anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., daily.

3. Staff

The advising staff is composed of persons whose backgrounds are similar to those of faculty. They hold advanced degrees, have previous college teaching or advising experience and represent diverse backgrounds and academic fields. An important value of the center has been to have advisors who reflect the broad educational backgrounds of the faculty and the diversity of the student body. New advisors participate in a six-week training period during the summer. Veteran staff members participate in on-going staff development and training through staff meetings, liaison with academic departments, developmental projects and attendance at regional and national conferences.

4. Resources and Referrals

Advisors use many resources and referral agencies. The faculty is, perhaps, the largest resource for both advisors and advisees to obtain information about departmental requirements and career opportunities. Residence halls provide not only a site for the advising center but also a communication network via campus mail, posters and presentations to R.A.'s and their living units. The Advising Center also works closely with Admissions and Orientation in registering new students. Advisors often consult with and refer students to Special Support Services, Financial Aid, the Counseling Service, Student Health, the Career Planning and Placement Center, Cooperative Education, and various academic support services to provide students with specialized help in areas outside academics.

CASE 2 - THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The University of Michigan Housing Division has a population of 9,000 residents, 95% of whom are undergraduates. The total undergraduate population on the Ann Arbor campus is approximately 22,000 of whom 13,000 are in the College of Literature, Science and Arts (LSA). LSA is the largest undergraduate college on the campus and its students represent a significant percentage of the residents in the on-campus housing system. Most freshmen and sophomores choose to live in the residence halls even though no University residency residency requirement exists.

As with many campuses, the U of M residence hall structures and staff provide an effective mechanism for assisting students in increasing the quality of their educational experience through the use of regular academic advising resources. Since so many residents are LSA students, the LSA Academic Counseling Office and the Housing Division have developed a joint program aimed at bringing accurate and timely academic information into the residence halls in formats designed to help residents make academic advising a regular part of their educational planning. In 1974, the two offices jointly created a single position bridging the services of both offices -- the Director of Academic Advising. Although the specific programs and services which are part of this concept are principally directed toward LSA students, attention is paid to the basic needs of undergraduates in every school and college on campus.

The U of M program focuses upon the development and application of decision-making skills as well as upon the "red-tape" information regarding rules, requirements, procedures and degree options.

The residence hall staff plays a central role in the delivery of hall-based academic information and advising. Their work serves to connect students with existing counseling resources within the university structure and to develop special programs and services tailored to meet the needs and interests represented in each building.

1. Staff Advising and Referral Functions

Residence hall staff are trained in basic counseling issues and methods as well as in the techniques of making effective referrals. A handbook of basic degree requirement information and college academic regulations and resources is provided to the staff to assist in the answering of simple specific questions concerning routines.

2. Residence Hall Libraries

The Housing Division maintains an independent system of libraries in its residence halls. As part of their collections, these libraries include career information, materials on study skills, exam files, course evaluation information, college bulletins and guides, etc. Several libraries also provide access to SIGI (System for Interactive Guidance and Information), a computer based values clarification and career field identification resource. Many special programs and workshops specially designed to enhance academic success are conducted through the libraries.

3. Staff Training

Several models of staff training are used with the resident advisors, resident directors and minority peer advisors.

a. A number of workshops are conducted for the entire staff of each residence hall throughout the year. Information covered included basic LSA degree requirements and registration regulations, general advising techniques and exploration of typical freshmen/sophomore academic issues throughout the academic year.

b. One resident director in each building is designated as the "Academic RD" and is charged with the responsibility of serving as the on-site specialist in this area. The Academic RD's receive additional intensive, regular training in general academic advising which they bring back to their buildings in the form of formal and informal in-service staff training, development of academic programs and services particular to their building, and liaison responsibilities with faculty programs active in the building. The Academic RD's generally supervise a sub-committee of resident advisors who design and implement special events, programs and services which fill resident needs.

4. Faculty Advising

Faculty Advisors from the LSA Counseling Office are assigned to each residence hall and several of their regularly scheduled office hours are devoted to on-site counseling. The faculty Advisor becomes a resource to residents and staff as they work with the residents and participants in special programs and events.

When possible, faculty advisors are matched during summer orientation with students who will be living in the building where they will be counseling in the Fall.

CASE 3 - THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

UIUC has 25,000 undergraduates, 8,500 (primarily freshmen & sophomores) of whom live in the residence hall system. The University's academic structure is strongly college-based. In most colleges, students may spend their freshmen/sophomore years in general, professional tracks (e.g., general engineering, general arts); 2,500 liberal arts students spend their first two years as undeclared majors in the "General Curriculum." For all practical purposes, the residence halls house a good number of students who are in various stages of undecidedness but who usually seek formal advice only during advance enrollment and registration periods.

All residence hall programs are meant to supplement existing academic advising systems.

The U of I presents the case of an advising system "under construction."

1. Academic Advising Referrals

Through the use of a specifically created resource handbook, residence hall staff are trained to refer students to the most appropriate person to accurately aid them with academic matters. The handbook was created by housing staff in conjunction with college deans and is used to train residence hall staff on an ongoing basis in academic referral skills.

2. Library Resource Center

The residence hall system maintains its own library system. Each semester all campus academic units are solicited to submit updated course and curriculum material for posting in each hall library. Under consideration are self-help centers which will hold materials from career placement, counseling and health education and which will have computer-assisted self-help units.

3. Staff Training

All resident advisors are required to take part in an initial training session and optional follow-up training sessions which address advising issues. Academic advising issues are introduced in a credit course required of all R.A.'s.

4. Collaboration with Other Units

Career Placement and Development Center and Counseling Center outreach programs and peer advisors are coordinated into appropriate residence hall programs.

5. Parents Professionals Program

Students' parents, who can serve as "professional role models," are brought in for informal seminars.

6. Advising Fairs

Departmental Units are invited to consult.

7. Advising Articles

A series of articles appears in The Daily Illini to address advising issues.

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